

*Resolution demands the withdrawal of Turkish troops from Cyprus*

For Immediate Release

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(Washington, D.C.) - On August 4, 2007 Congressman Albio Sires and Congressman Gus Bilirakis, both members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, introduced two resolutions expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that Turkey should end its military occupation of Cyprus. Such a development would greatly improve America's security interests in the region.

H.Res. 620, introduced by Congressman Sires, and H.Res. 627, introduced by Congressman Bilirakis, urge the Turkish government to end their occupation of Cyprus. Since the invasion of Cyprus on July 20, 1974, the number of Turkish troops on the island nation has now increased to over 40,000. With over 13 million crossings having taken place by Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots into each others communities without incident, the resolutions call for an immediate withdrawal of Turkish troops and renewed effort in negotiations between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots.

"Both resolutions address the crisis in the Republic of Cyprus. Congressman Bilirakis's resolution addresses a number of serious problem issues facing Cyprus and my resolution focuses only on the benefits of ending the 33-year-old Turkish military occupation," said Congressman Sires. "We introduced two resolutions that we believe are quite compatible. They don't conflict and, in fact, they compliment each other."

As Turkey continues with its process towards membership in the European Union (E.U.), the European Commission has noted that without a settlement in Cyprus, the situation could become a serious obstacle to Turkey's accession into the E.U. In addition, the Negotiating Framework for membership also required that countries working towards accession must recognize all E.U. member states and Turkey's accession requires Turkey to recognize Cyprus and to work toward normalizing relations. The withdrawal of Turkish troops from the Cyprus is the best way to prepare for new comprehensive negotiations.

"Even though the Turkish invasion of Cyprus took place 33 years ago, the pain and suffering of this tragic occasion still ripples throughout the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities," said Congressman Bilirakis, co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues. "A disastrous result of this occupation is the division among Greek and Turkish Cypriots, who have since lived their lives forcibly separated along ethnic lines. This cracking of the Cypriot nation is a crime against the people of Cyprus and can only be resolved by the full withdrawal of Turkish forces from the Island."